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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - UAE Government Will Support the TFG

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY. On June 4, visiting Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (DAS) Karl Wycoff met with Ambassador Mohamed Sultan Saif Al Sowaidi, Director of the Department of Arabic Affairs at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accompanied by Abu Dhabi Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Douglas Greene, DAS Wycoff detailed U.S. policy toward Somalia and the financial and materiel support provided to Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). DAS Wycoff highlighted U.S. security concerns, including the continued operation of the East Africa al-Qaeda cell and its links with al-Shabaab. Ambassador Al Sowaidi stated that UAE policy toward Somalia is in complete harmony with the U.S. and that his government fully supports TFG President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. He agreed with our analysis of the current fragile situation in Somalia, expressing the view that while Foreign Terrorist Organization al-Shabaab is present, it is neither strong nor deeply rooted. Ambassador Al Sowaidi said the UAE is ready to provide assistance to the TFG and work with the U.S. on actions against individuals and organizations undermining Somalia's transitional government. End Summary.

U.S. and UAE Share Similar
Perspectives on Somalia

2. (SBU) As part of an ongoing effort to engage Gulf states on Somalia, Embassy Abu Dhabi facilitated a meeting with the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and visiting Acting DAS Karl Wycoff. On June 4, accompanied by Abu Dhabi DCM Douglas Greene, DAS Wycoff met with Ambassador Al Sowaidi. DAS Wycoff detailed U.S. policy toward Somalia and our top priorities to address the humanitarian crisis and improve the security situation. He highlighted U.S. financial and materiel support provided to the TFG and our goal for broader engagement with all regions, including the Somali diaspora, to increase support for the TFG. DAS Wycoff highlighted U.S. security concerns, including the continued operation of the East Africa al-Qaeda cell and its links with al-Shabaab, and stated that solutions to piracy are rooted in encouraging development and stability in Somalia.

3. (SBU) Ambassador Al Sowaidi responded that UAE's policy toward Somalia is in complete harmony with the U.S. and that his government fully supports TFG President Sharif. He agreed with our analysis of the current fragile situation in Somalia and said he understood our

concerns with al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam. Al Sowaidi stated that leaders of al-Shabaab refused offers to be part of the reconciliation process and that while al-Shabaab is present in all regions, it is neither strong nor deeply rooted. He said that while these groups talk about Islam, "Islam is not part of their fight." Al Sowaidi said that foreigners make up at least one third of al-Shabaab's fighting force, coming from countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen. The Ambassador concluded that it is very important to assist the TFG with equipment and financial support and reiterated that he agreed with all of the points DAS Wycoff made.

Supporters and Spoilers

14. (SBU) Ambassador Al Sowaidi said that both the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference support the TFG, and the UAE is ready to provide assistance to the transitional government. He said that most Arab countries support President Sharif. Al Sowaidi noted the recent visit of TFG Foreign Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Omaar (ForMin), and lauded the ForMin as "a man who understands how to manage a serious business" and an excellent interlocutor for the TFG. Al Sowaidi said that Omaar had a meeting with UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Gargash, but that he was not aware of the specific projects and initiatives that were agreed upon.

15. (SBU) Al Sowaidi also acknowledged that the TFG and President Sharif have many detractors who are actively trying to undermine the TFG's efforts. He agreed that Eritrea played an unhelpful role, as a result of its relationship with Ethiopia, but was unwilling to go into greater detail. Al Sowaidi asked DAS Wycoff about the role of Iran which "seems to be interfering everywhere." Al Sowaidi said he completely agrees with DAS Wycoff's view of the most imminent danger

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being al-Shabaab's relationship with al-Qaeda. Ambassador Al Sowaidi emphasized that he will urge the UAE ForMin to immediately act to address this threat. He also agreed that the Government of the UAE is prepared to act on specific information about individuals and organizations based in UAE to prevent them from undermining President Sharif and the TFG. DCM Greene stated that there is excellent collaboration between the U.S. and UAE governments in sharing information and that we could continue to use these channels to collaborate in these areas.

16. (SBU) DAS Wycoff concluded by thanking Ambassador Al Sowaidi for the unfettered access we enjoyed when engaging with representatives of the Somali diaspora resident in UAE, and stating that we look forward to continued cooperation.

17. (SBU) Embassy Abu Dhabi has cleared on this cable. DAS Wycoff has approved the release of this cable.

RANNEBERGER